



Building the road to success

Welcome to the Woodland Park School District e-Newsletter, which will be sent out weekly when school is in session. This will serve as a glimpse of some of the wonderful things going on in our schools and with our students, as well as a point of reference for upcoming events.

Your Partner in Education,  
Michele R. Pillari, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

## Important dates to note

Friday, Jan. 25 - Memorial School 2nd Marking Period Ends

Friday, Feb. 1 - Memorial School 2nd Marking Period Report Cards Issued

Friday, Feb. 1 - Charles Olbon Super Bowl Dress Down Day

## Community rallying for Memorial 8th grader diagnosed with rare brain cancer

Holy Cross Church is helping to raise funds for a borough family in need.

A dinner dance is being planned on Friday, Feb. 15 called "Valentine for Josephine," to raise funds for Josephine Palman, a 13-year-old in eighth grade at Memorial Middle School, who was diagnosed last February with DIPG, a rare and lethal childhood brain cancer.

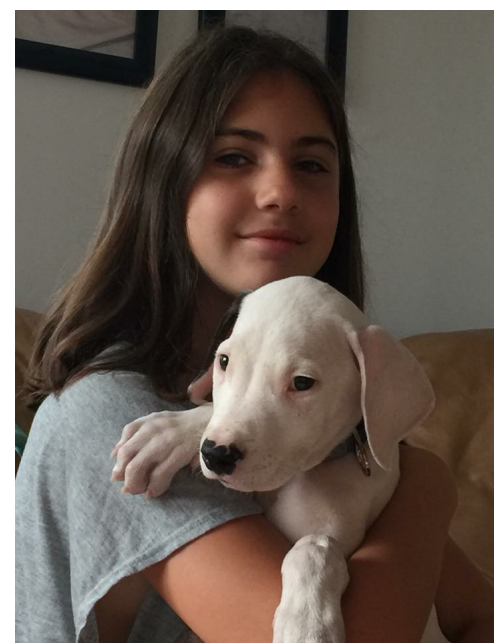
DIPG affects about 250 children annually. Its survival rate is very low, as there is no cure, according to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital. Tumors can't be removed surgically as cancer cells are intermixed with normal cells in the brainstem that are crucial for functions like breathing.

DIPG greatly impacts Josephine's nervous system. She is currently unable to maintain her balance and can't walk without assistance. This doesn't stop her from wanting to go places and enjoy life. When she feels well enough, she likes to go to movies, the mall, or to the spa.

"Josephine's mom Patricia was told to take her daughter home and enjoy what time she had left in this world," said Don Malcuit, Patricia's boss. "This didn't sit well with Patricia and she and her daughter have been seeking every possible way to fight this horrible monster called DIPG."

The family has been traveling to New York City for hospital appointments, treatments, physical therapy, MRIs, surgery, biopsies, and radiotherapy. They are now traveling monthly to Monterrey, Mexico, for a chemotherapy treatment not available in the U.S. and not covered by insurance. Exhausting all funds, the family is in serious debt, having spent over \$150,000 so far on treatments.

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# Annual Kids Heart Challenge launches at Beatrice Gilmore School

Beatrice Gilmore School launched the annual Kids Heart Challenge on Friday, Jan. 18, with a visit from the American Heart Association's Lori Wehmeyer, who is regional director of youth markets.

The event kicks off the school's annual fundraising effort for the American Heart Association, which will culminate on Feb. 14 with the Kids Heart Challenge in gym classes. The event was formerly known as Jump Rope for Heart. Last year, the BG community raised over \$3,000.

Wehmeyer introduced the "Heart Heroes," a slate of characters each aimed at helping keep kids healthy and safe. The seven characters each have a message, such as "Be You," "Color Your Plate," and "Be Physically Active." The students can earn character keychains with donations made during the event.

Students were encouraged to register online and take advantage of the online activities as well as download the American Heart Association's mobile app. The kids were given a sticker they could color and bring to life via the app.

On the online site, there are challenges the kids could pledge to take, such as drinking more water and exercising.

Wehmeyer noted that students did not have to raise money to take part in the Challenge on Feb. 14. All students will participate. She encouraged them to raise whatever funds they could to help the American Heart Association help people of all ages in need.

Technical difficulties prevented the students from watching a video about the life saving work of the Association. They watched the video the following week, which features a 3-year-old named Finn, who is national event ambassador.



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"We have been visiting different doctors and hospitals desperately trying to find care that will help Josephine while we struggle to find a balance between treatment options and quality of life," her mother Patricia said. "We are praying that while she is fighting, a medical breakthrough will happen... but the cold reality of a brain tumor is weighing heavily on our hearts as our child has the fight of her life ahead of her."

Doctors are trying to improve her quality of life with weekly physical therapy and occupational therapy. Her teachers come to the house two hours every day to help her keep up with school. And she's given lots of emotional support and love by her siblings Jonathan, 31, Jessica, 30, Jennifer, 29, Justin, 16, and Julia, 10; family members; and friends.

Josephine, whose nickname is "Pepa," is not in pain. She's uncomfortable with some facial paralysis as it impairs her communication and it's a bit frustrating.

"Pepa is really special," Malcuit said. "I have never heard her complain. She's such a brave young lady."

"Valentine for Josephine" will be held at Holy Cross, 220 McBride Ave., on Friday, Feb. 15 at 5:45 p.m. There will be live music by Dockside, as well as a hot buffet, beer, wine, soda, coffee, tea, and desserts. Donation is \$50 per person. For tickets, call 973-223-9762 or email [ppallman@icloud.com](mailto:ppallman@icloud.com). Kindly RSVP by Feb. 8.

A GoFund me page has been set up to help raise funds to alleviate medical expenses for the family. The page is located at [www.gofundme.com/josephine-the-tumor-warrior](http://www.gofundme.com/josephine-the-tumor-warrior). Updates are also available at [facebook.com/battlebraincancer](https://facebook.com/battlebraincancer).